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RICE—DISCUSSION

S. LOCKE BREAUX: Let us consider, for a few moments some of the commercial phases of the cultivation and marketing of rice.

Granted the correctness of the statement that the culture of rice is adapted to our Gulf coast territory, and that so far its development as an agricultural product is caring for itself as rapidly as the process of assimilation can take place, and granted further that its value as a food product is beyond cavil, it brings us to the question of what we are going to do with the rice after we have made it.

The industry being an infant one, there is no question but that much just criticism can apply as to our present methods of trading. To the man from the West or the East who is accustomed to the handling of the stable grain crops of those sections, it seems that we are uselessly expensive in all that we do. Primarily, the manufacturing end of the industry is scattered over a wide range of territory, with the consequence that buyers are at sea, values are irregular, and taking our experience of this year as a criterion, parities are not maintained. It is much a case of each one for himself and the "devil take the hindermost."

Going a little below the surface, one of the principal reasons for this condition, in my opinion, is the system of toll milling. The different factories or mills look to the agriculturist to furnish them with their raw products in the operation of their plants, with the consequence that, not having direct monetary interest in the product, the principal idea of the miller is to run his

machinery so as to get the greatest possible output, when it is a fact that due to the lack of uniformity of grade, style, and character in rough rice, each lot, in order to produce the best result should be considered as to its individuality and handled accordingly. Under this system the best results do not always obtain in the manufacturing process of turning the rough into clean.

Then after the rice is ready for market, instead of the judgment of the manufacturer dictating when to sell, and how to sell, the constant pressure on the part of the owner of the goods wanting settlements and wanting money, means that the distribution is forced and influenced, not in accord with the markets or with the demands, but by the necessities and lack of judgment of the owner.

The remedy for this condition to my mind is simple. The manufacturing end of rice should do what the manufacturers of every other industry in the country do, and that is, buy their raw product and handle their output as their own goods, and this condition I believe will not be many years before coming to pass. A further advantage to accrue to the mills buying would be if, as the rice was purchased, it could be assorted out. Then the mill runs as to grade and style would have more uniformity, so that after business in a certain locality had been worked up there would be a greater certainty of supplying that trade with the goods to which it had become accustomed. I will illustrate this by calling attention to the manner in which the flour miller is enabled to advertise a certain brand and push it in a market and due to its uniformity get more money for it than he would by grinding up wheat into flour as it came to him instead of selecting it out.

I beg to say that my remarks must not be considered as being any adverse criticism of the manner and methods of any one branch of the industry, but I do believe that in the development of that industry we have got to get on the same basis as applies to, and as experience has shown to be the best basis in handling the grain stable crops of the country. It is true that New Orleans is the primary market for rice, the balance of the territory following her lead as to values, and just so long as the output is passing through her hands, just that long do we maintain prices and distribute the goods as the needs of buyers call for. This illustrates the necessity for the different mills through their clean rice men keeping in touch with each other, a difficult matter when the factories are scattered throughout a large territory, and each is trying to dispose of its product direct through its own clean rice man instead of pooling together and handling the common product through a single head located in some large center where the markets can be followed first hand, instead of through correspondence and telegrams.

I am of those who believe that the rice industry has come to stay, and that the future promises it will become one of the staple crops of the Gulf coast territory. It will not be very long before rice gets to be a staple in these United States as are our wheat and corn.

I will only touch upon the good work being accomplished by the Rice Association of America which represents the only concerted effort being made toward the increased consumption of rice, and the establishment of a rice kitchen at the St. Louis World's Fair will, I believe, accomplish much toward that end.